

Little Thetford Scrapbook 1897-1990
Extracts from
A Cambridgeshire scrapbook 1897-1989
By Mike Petty

revised 2015 08 05

Introduction

***For the last 50 years I have helped thousands of people research Cambridge and its county.
This index is my way of saying 'Thank You' for all they have taught me***

Each evening from March 1997 to April 2015 I compiled a 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News in which I featured snippets from issues of 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago. I sought out unusual items relating to villages and areas of Cambridge not usually featured

These stories are from issues of the Cambridge Daily/Evening/Weekly News or Cambridge Independent Press between March 1897 and December 1989

There are some gaps: the years 1915-1921, 1940 to 1946 and 1965 to 1971 have yet to be added.

But it includes the 'Cambridge Independent Press 'From Our Old Files' stories 1915-1920, 1940-45

Many entries include the date of the original story in the form YY/MM/DD - thus 33 01 29 means 29th January 1933. Other dates are those on which the article appeared in my columns. I have notes of the precise dates and pages in which the original appeared

I can supply actual copies of many of these articles and have 'Looking Back' compilations for a number of topics as listed below. If you would like any of these please let me know.

The newspapers are held in the Cambridgeshire Collection together with other Cambridge titles back to 1762. They have newspaper cuttings files on 750 topics from 1958 to date together with a variety of indexes including a record of stories for every village in Cambridgeshire between 1770-1900.

I initiated much of the indexing and have many indexes of my own. Please feel free to contact me for advice and assistance.

For more details of newspapers and other sources for Cambridgeshire history see my website www.mikepetty.org.uk

This index was produced as a working part of my personal research resources and would benefit by editing. If you can make any of it work for you I am delighted. But remember you should always check everything!

Please make what use of it you may. Please remember who it came from

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A Cambridgeshire Scrapbook , Little Thetford Extracts

1899 Apr 11

The lady Churchwarden is still something of a novelty, nevertheless she has come to stay. At the recent Easter vestry at Thetford, near Ely, Miss Jarrow was for the sixth times in succession elected people's Churchwarden, and the election had the hearty approval of the Rector who spoke in the highest terms of her ability and the way she managed the parish accounts. But Great Staughton in Huntingdonshire has gone one better and both the Churchwardens are ladies. So far this is the only parish in the country which can boast of two lady churchwardens

1900 Oct 27

A sad suicide occurred at Lt Thetford where a platelayer employed on the G.E.R. imagined that he was a sufferer from scarlet fever, although medical examinations proved to the contrary. There were several cases in the village. Shortly before ten o'clock he left his fellow-workers near the bridge over the Old West not telling them where he was going. Time passed and a shepherd brought the intelligence that a handkerchief had been found in the wash near the river. After a diligent search his body was found in the water beneath the railway bridge

1904 Nov 15

A gruesome accident occurred at the railway crossing at Little Thetford. Two men were returning from Fulbourn with the corpse of an Ely native who was by trade a basket maker and had been detained in the asylum. A four-wheel cart, with no lights, collided with their trap which was turned over on to its side. The horse was dragged down with it and the two men hurt. The coffin containing the corpse was left on the road and the trap had to make a second journey to convey the remains to Ely

1909 Mar 05

The funeral of the Rev R.M. Williams took place in Lt Thetford churchyard and in the evening a muffled peal was rung on the Stretham church bells. He had been curate there during the time of his terrible tragedy: in September 1896 he had cycled with his wife from Stretham to Cambridge, it being the first anniversary of their wedding. They had just crossed Victoria Bridge when she collided with a butcher's cart and was instantly killed.

1910 Sep 16

Thetford object to vote for Stretham Rector Stitt – 10 09 16d

1911 Nov 03

Fire destroyed two cottages in Pope's Lane, Little Thetford. One, consisting of two rooms with no upstairs, was occupied by a man named Moden who succeeded in saving all his goods and chattels. The other comprising two rooms down and two up was tenanted by Richard Driver who was not at home and some of the furniture was consumed. Luckily there was no wind or some old buildings on the other side of the narrow village lane must have been involved. The blaze could be seen from Stretham Railway Station. 11 11 03a

1914 Aug 21

Percy Langford, labourer, drowned Lt Thetford

1915 09 10

Dewsbury, Lt Thetford child scalded

1919 Mar 12

5,000 Acres Under Water. — In consequence of three serious breaks in the banks caused by the recent floods, it is estimated that about 5,000 acres of farm land, including some smallholdings, are still under water to a depth of from 2 ft. to 5.ft. in Cambridgeshire. In places the water stretches as far as the eye can see, cottages, farm buildings, stacks and just the top rails of gates showing out of the water. The breaks which occurred in the banks holding back the water resulted in large areas, hitherto regarded as safe from the inroads of flood water, becoming inundated. The damage has been most extensive and in some cases tons of produce, particularly potato crops, have been rendered almost valueless. The places where the banks gave way were (1) at Barway, on the Soham Lode, (2) at Waterbeach Fen, on the river Cam, (3) at Stretham and Thetford Fen, on the Old West River. The worst break was probably at Barway, where the bank apparently gave way from underneath, after being undermined by the water. Huge portions of the bank were torn away by the rush of water and can be seen now dotted about in the floods like little islands.

1924 Oct 02

When workmen arrived at a pair of council houses in the course of erection on Cambridge road, Lt Thetford, they found there had been intruders during the night who had helped themselves pretty freely to what they could find. Tools belonging to Mr Robert Rayner of Stretham and Mr Cornwell of Ely were missing. A considerable amount of timber, asbestos sheeting and other materials had been removed and a new door displaced from its hinges and taken also.

1930 Nov 06

Little Thetford was the scene of a big blaze, a large six-roomed thatched house built in 1300 being totally destroyed. After the old roof dropped the four main walls were a roaring furnace and the blazing embers carried long distances. Soon nothing was left but burning beams and scorched walls which had evidently been built of the old Fen mud. But for the efforts of villages similar large thatched houses nearby would have been involved. The 'Three Horse Shoes' public house opposite was plied with ladders and a chain of buckets formed and water thrown on the thatched roof to stop a possible outbreak here. The cause is a mystery. Fireworks were being let off, but not at this end of the village. 30 11 06a

1932 Feb 24

Mr R. Hinkin of Little Thetford has passed away, days after celebrating his 101st birthday. His health was remarkably good; he was only once attended by a doctor; that was five years ago when he fell from a ladder as a result of it breaking. He started work on the land at the age of ten, finally giving up when he was 97. He had six children, 25 grandchildren and about 40 great-grandchildren 32 02 24

1936 Apr 03

There were lively scenes at Little Thetford when a meeting was held to elect five councillors to constitute the Parish Council. Mr H.E. Kisby topped the poll with 21 votes but an unsuccessful candidate protested that the election was not valid as one of the voters was not on the electoral roll: "There is jiggery-pokery going on", he alleged. The man demanded a public poll which, as it received the backing of four electors, will be held. 36 04 03

1936 Jul 29

The younger generation are not following in their fathers' footsteps and drinking beer, instead they are spending money on cinemas and motor cycles, the landlord of the Rose and Crown at Little Thetford claimed when appealing against his rate assessment. Mr H. Nunn of Sutton said he employed several men in his ice-cream business but the machinery was only used six months a year while Mr G. Cobbin a miller of Downham Road Ely said he had lost trade as the beet industry had hit him heavily; he was grinding very little and the mill had not been in

use for two years. 36 07 30 also J.H. Acred said his cottage at Green End Stretham was very old and had not the conveniences of modern houses. He had had a portion added to the building

1937 Mar 26

A great battle is going on over a 50 mile front to save the fens from serious flooding. But in the minds of the hundreds of men working on strengthening the sodden banks is the ever present question 'Will the banks hold?' Despite their efforts the Old West River at Aldreth Causeway overflowed and nine inches of water poured into Haddenham Fen causing people to leave their houses. Great anxiety was also caused when water came over the banks at Willingham and at Lt Thetford where a split occurred in a bank 37 03 16 & a

1938 May 26

Cawdle Fen Drainage Commissioners were sued by a farmer whose land was flooded in 1936 and 1937 when water flowed across the railway line. The sluice gates in the lock had been worn out for tears and water leaked back into the fen. The drains were grown up and had not been 'mudded out' for some time. The gauge on the pumping station was out of place because the fen had sunk. In Lt Thetford they had stopped the old paddle wheel and installed two efficient pumps and it was not possible to drain Cawdle Fen without pumping. But the Commissioners said the system could not be expected to cope with abnormally high flood conditions 38 05 26 & a

1938 Aug 29

Ely Council's decision to allow the swimming baths to be used on Sunday afternoons prompted strong protests. The Railway Mission deplored it, as did Downham Baptist chapel. Haddenham Baptists say it will necessitate some amount of Sunday labour, Lt Thetford think it a retrograde step and Ely Sunday School Union thought that for the sake of the children Sunday should be preserved from worldly and secular labour 34 08 29

1939 Feb 24

Lt Thetford postman accused of stealing postal packet 39 02 24b

1939 April 04

A Lt Thetford man told the court he had served in the army until 1919 then commenced work as an agricultural labourer. In 1921 he became a postman. He was married with five children and farmed 65 acres of smallholding. He brought his own implements and made a good profit until 1937 when, during the disastrous floods, seven acres were completely under water and other crops were poor. Next year was equally bad owing to drought. He worked harder but his health failed him and he fell into temptation. 39 04 06

1939 Dec 01

Joseph Gay, gatekeeper at Cambridge Road, Lt Thetford, said he saw nothing approaching so closed the gates which had red lamps on them. Then he noticed a vehicle coming from Ely and could see it was not going to stop. He showed a red light with a hand lamp but the car crashed into the gate. The driver said he was travelling at 35 mph with side lights only, because of the blackout. He saw red lights but thought they indicated an obstruction on the site of the road. He had applied his brakes and skidded. If it had been peace time he would have had his headlights on. 39 12 01

1945 Aug 10

Angling. — An Ely competitor, Mr. L. Harvey, won the Cambridge Albion Angling Society's match for the Addenbrooke's Hospital Cup (given by "Cambridge Daily News"), which was fished at Little Thetford on Monday. He had a "bag" of 151b 12oz 6dr comprising -mainly of bream. There were 62 competitors, of whom 18 weighed in fish totalling 791b 10z

2dr. Bream formed the bulk of the catches, but there was nothing of exceptional size. Several others caught fish in a match which, contrary to the Society's custom, was "all in." Runner up was Mr. W. Marshall, jun., with 10 lb 8oz 4dr, and other placings were: 3 Mr.E. Newman, 71b 3oz. 4 Mr.L.Parr, 61b 8oz 2dr, 5 Mr.D.Doggett, 41b 12oz, 6 Mr. H.Langley sen..41b 10oz 12 dr, 7 Mr. H.G. Barker, 41b 3oz, In the unavoidable absence of the president (Mr. J. H. Cartwright) the cup was presented to the winner by the Hon. Secretary (Mr. H. G. Barker). The financial result is not yet available, but it is anticipated that about £20 will be handed to the Hospital.

1946 04 16

Sidney Gillet trampled and killed when tried to stop runaway horses in potato field, inquest at Three Horseshoes, Lt Thetford – 46 04 16a

1948 Aug 24

Queen Mary took Cambridge by surprise today when she visited the town on one of her private visits to Mr Stanley Woolston's antique store. At precisely noon the car containing the Queen slid into the kerb outside the shop. It was not her own car, however, but the Ely police patrol car. The green Daimler in which the Queen had been travelling developed a slight defect at Lt Thetford and Her Majesty transferred to the police patrol car following the Royal car. The Daimler, duly repaired, was waiting outside Woolston's some little time before Her Majesty was ready to leave.

1952 Aug 08

A Londoner was fined £3 for unlawfully obtaining rationed feeding stuffs at Lt Thetford. PC Harding was on motor patrol duty at Fowlmere when he stopped a lorry and noticed what looked like feeding stuff. Defendant said it was Quaker Oats and was unrationed but the sack was marked "Blue Cross Balanced Food, No.2 Pig Food". The officer concluded it was a rationed product and asked if he had surrendered coupons for it. The reply was "No". How he came to be in possession of the sack they did not know. The man claimed to have bought it from a poultry dealer because he thought he would be charged with stealing it. He had been at work for 16 hours and wanted to get home.

1955 Nov 04

Tenants of council houses at Westmoor Common, Little Downham, have to look for rat holes to pour waste water in because they have no sink or drains of any description. All that was needed were a few glazed pipes as there was a septic tank. But there was no way of installing them without a comprehensive scheme which would be too expensive. Seven years ago a similar scheme was proposed at Lt Thetford but nothing had been done there either. It was wrong that there were council houses without sinks when they were spending money on modern houses. 55 11 04-a

1958 May 22

Since May 15th ten outbreaks of fowl pest have been confirmed within a radius of eight miles of Ely in the parishes of Little Thetford, Wilburton, Coveney, Witchford and Manea. An order under the Fowl Pest Restrictions now comes into force and poultry may not be moved except under licence. The holding of poultry store markets is also prohibited. 58 05 22b

1962 Dec 29

Cambridgeshire has not been too badly affected by the cold but Elmdon was cut off, Ickleton lost power on Christmas Day and a cow had to be rescued after it broke through an ice-covered dyke at Braham Farm, Lt Thetford. When pulled out it was too exhausted to stand and was given half a bottle of whisky while a makeshift sledge was constructed. Snow ploughs were used on the Sutton-Earish Road and several major firms have sent gangs to help clear snow after building work ceased. Several bags of barley fell from a lorry at Littlebury

proving a stroke of good fortune for wild birds. Hundreds of them fed on the seed and passing motorists had to sound their horns to clear birds from the road. 62 12 31a

1964 Apr 30

Once a day, at 1.15 pm, a little diesel train leaves Ely station, goes eight miles and arrives at Sutton. Then at 3.20 pm it turns round and goes back again. Hauling three goods wagons, it stops first at Little Thetford where the driver and fireman nip down smartly from the cab, open and close the gates, and continue the trip. It carries mainly fuel, with possible stops at Stretham, Wilburton and Haddenham stations. Thirty years this little-known line carried a passenger service. It was constructed under the Grunty Fen Railway Act of 1864 and the Friends of Haddenham hope to run a centenary passenger special. 64 01 30b

1964 Sep 03

Plans by Theodora Gibbons of Hope Cottage, Wilburton Road, Stretham for residential development on 10 acres of land in Watson's Lane, Little Thetford were too extensive, planners say. The site fronts on an unmade drove and there is no sewer, though a public water supply was available. Permission was granted to develop the frontage only, providing access to the rear was created to cater for possible further development in stages. 64 09 03

1970 01 01

Lt Thetford round house restored – 70 01 01a

1975 Aug 26

A visit to the lavatory by a railwayman has been caught up in a web of red tape. Mr Clarence Page who mans the signal box West River Crossing, Lt Thetford, wanted a proper flush lavatory, after getting through three of the chemical type in the last seven years. He got permission and a plumber came down and fitted it at a cost of £25. However when the bill reached British Rail headquarters they were not pleased. The flush lavatory was ripped out and another chemical one put in. He reckons the exercise has cost as much as £200. The Union representative says: "We want a flush lavatory. We want to be classified as human beings"

1976 Jul 12

About 100 Cub Scouts and Brownie Guides collapsed from heat exhaustion at an open air service conducted by the Bishop of Ely at the Cub Scout jubilee camp at Braham Farm, Lt Thetford. There were about 4,000 people at the service, including about 2,500 Cubs and Brownies. The service was cut short and ended after half-an-hour. "The fact that this is the biggest-ever camp and that we expect almost 10,000 visitors just goes to show what a healthy state the movement is in this part of the world", said Assistant Commissioner, Mr Barry Howe.

1980 Jun 16

Little Thetford is to have its own riverside nightclub. Work is underway to convert the Fish and Duck pub and restaurant into a licensed discotheque and top music personalities have been booked for the opening weekend. They include Radio 1 disco jockey Dave Lee Travis and disco dancers Pan's People. The pub was closed nearly two years ago after the owner was hurt in a road accident, now it will become one of the top night spots in East Anglia. A brand new marine with over 200 moorings has yet to be opened. 80 06 16

1980 Jul 04

Don't miss the spectacular opening nights of East Anglia's news, biggest nightspot – the Fish and Duck, Little Thetford. We've got the place, DJs, lighting, music, groups, food. If you come you get an action-packed show you'll never forget: Radio 1 DJ Dave Lee Travis & Pans People. Groups Clone & Red Express. Free Bar-BQ included. 4,000 tickets at £4. – Advert 80 07 04

1980 Jul 08

There have been a flood of complaints from people attending the opening of a new riverside disco at the Fish and Duck, Lt Thetford. They say they did not get value for money and just about everything was wrong: the barbecue was just one beefburger in a bread roll, toilets were filthy and without water, drinks were over-priced and glasses unavailable while many people turned up in old jeans when smart dress was expected. But this has been strongly denied by the managing director who asked: where can you get that kind of entertainment for £4? 80 07 08b

1980 Sep 20

The Round House, Little Thetford is thought to be a lookout post built at the end of the 15th century. It was lived in, divided up into two three-storey cottages, up until 1959 and then stood empty for some years. The roof was in danger of collapsing and the 'stairs' were virtual ladders. Now it has been turned into one dwelling with a small extension at the rear. The thick walls are solid brick throughout; built before the village it could well outlast it. 80 09 20

1983 May 25

East Cambs planning chief slammed the 'hysterical local opposition' each time they put forward plans for a permanent gypsy site. Already Wilburton, Mepal and Little Thetford are no go areas because of the local opposition. It means the job of solving the problem becomes progressively more difficult. The only alternative was to abandon the whole thing. Councillors agreed no action would be taken to prosecute longstanding residents on unauthorised sites until more suitable alternative plots were available 83 05 25 p7

1984 Oct 26

The Fish and Duck pub and marina at Little Thetford failed to reach its reserve price of £150,000 when put up for auction. The complex on a 23 acre site at the confluence of the Great Ouse and Cam was put up for sale by its present owner, Nowinvest Ltd but the top bid fell a little short of what was required 84 10 26

1985 Apr 11

A nursery owner had to dash for his life when a giant greenhouse collapses as gales wreaked havoc. Mr Vincent Di Paola, who has been running the nursery in Fulbourn for 15 years, had to watch as guttering started to collapse and 8,000 panes of glass smashed to the ground. He supplies the London market with lettuces all year round and 16,000 plants were lost. Elsewhere a woman had a lucky escape when a tree crashed her car between Little Thetford and Stretham 85 04 12

1988 Apr 28

Andaman Resources of Lt Thetford to exploit a gold strike in Ireland – 88 04 28

1989 May 23

Andaman Resources of Lt Thetford prospect for gold – 89 05 23